AN
Impartial Account
OF
Mr JOHN MASON
OF
WATER-STRATFORD,
AND HIS
SENTIMENTS.

By *H. MAURICE*, Rector of *Tyringham*, *Bucks*.

Μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν παρ' ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν, ἀλλὰ φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ Σωφρονεῖν. *Ne quis Sapiat supra quam oportet, sed ad sobrietatem Sapiat.* Rom. 12. 3.

——— *Proxima puris*
Sors est manibus, nescire nefas. Sen. Herc. Fur.

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THE Deſign of *theſe Papers* is to tranſmit to Poſterity, as remarkable an inſtance of *pure Enthuſiaſm* as the Reformed World ever knew.

They are writ in Anſwer to ſeveral Letters.

The *Firſt* of which deſir'd a Repreſentation of the Matters of Fact at *Water-Stratford*.

The *Next* deſir'd an *Account* of Mr. *Maſon*'s Character.

The *Third* ask'd *my Thoughts* of the Impulſes and Viſion to which he pretended, and what might occaſion them?

The *Laſt* was, To enquire how it could be conſiſtent with the Goodneſs of God to ſuffer a Perſon that meant well, to be deluded?

The Fact is this, That for Four Years, or more, Mr. *Maſon* had been a ſtiff Aſſerter of *our Saviour's Reign a Thouſand Years on Earth*, and had drawn a Scheme of it in a Diſcourſe, call'd, *The Mid-night Cry*; which was Preach'd in ſeveral Places with great Zeal, and receiv'd with much Applauſe.

This brought him many Followers Ten Miles about; and as his Hearers encreas'd for the Novelty of the Doctrine, ſo the Notion was confirm'd, and in time improv'd.

The *Reign upon Earth* was to commence in *England*, and *Water-Stratford* was the very Spot of Ground where *his* Standard was to be ſet up; Thoſe who would repair thither, might find a ſafe Retreat, but all other parts of the Nation would *infallibly* be expos'd to Fire and Sword.

Thoſe who could heartily believe this, thought it their Intereſt to reſide *there*; and thoſe who had it, brought with them as many Neceſſaries as they thought would laſt 'till the good Time ſhould come.

As for Lodgings, when his Houſe was fill'd, ſome (as I was told) lay in the Town, and o-

thers

thers made themſelves open Partitions in the Barn, fearing no ill, becauſe they deſign'd none.

About *Eaſter* laſt their Notions were fix'd, and their Habitations ſettl'd.

Here they ſpent their time, nigh an hundred of them, (beſides many hundreds of well-wiſhers who were coming and going) in Dancing, Singing, Praying, *&c.* 'till the *long expected Appearance* preſented it ſelf, on *April* the 16*th.* laſt, about *One* in the Morning.

Towards the latter end of *April*, being at *Northampton*, I call'd on Mr. *Ives*, a Relation to Mr. *Maſon*'s Family, and diſcourſing on his late Pretences; Mrs. *Ives* ſhow'd me the following Letter, dated *April* the 23*d.* which I immediately Tranſcrib'd.

April 23*d.* Water-Stratford.

Dear Couſ. *Ives.*

THE Thing which I am about to relate to you, is very wonderful: I need not rehearſe what Doctrines my Brother *has of late (four Years) been upon; you know it has been of Chriſt's ſetting up of his Kingdom, and that it would be uſher'd in by a dreadful Tribulation, and that this was very near at hand. But the great Thing I have to acquaint you with,*

with, is, That on the ſixteenth day of this Inſtant, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt did appear in this Houſe to his Servant my Brother Maſon *in his glorious Perſon. He was in a Crimſon Garment, his Countenance exceeding Beautiful, abundance of ſweetneſs and great Majeſty. He had the ſight of him for ſome conſiderable time, and then he was pleas'd to diſappear. I have not time nor ſtrength to write what I heard from him of Chriſt's glorious Perſon: He often ſays, that all the glories that the World ſpeaks of, are but dirt to what has appear'd in the face of Chriſt. Thus much I was deſirous to acquaint you, and the reſt of my Relations with; and now* He *and the reſt, that have had* the Faith of Chriſt's coming, *live in the immediate expectation of Chriſt's Appearance* here, *to gather to himſelf all his People, to preſerve them from the ſtorm that is coming upon this land. Thoſe I ſay that God has given this Faith to, are come hither, and ſing and dance before the* Ark *day and night, ſome at a time, and bid the* Michals *deſpiſe to their peril. Here has been many hundred of Spectators, but my Brother's advice to them all is daily, to go home, and ſee if they have* Oyl, *and trim their Lamps, for the* Bridegroom is very near coming.

My Brother has had a thouſand falſe ſtories reported of him; and one, that he was mad; But he never had any thing like it in all his Life. *And it is not doubted*

doubted but he will prove the Prophet of the Age, and ſent of God, as Noah *was, to warn the World, and the Forerunner of* Chriſt's ſecond *coming, as the Holy Baptiſt was of* Chriſt's firſt *coming; and* that Elijah *in the laſt of* Malachy, *that was to be ſent before the Great and Dreadful Day.*

But I muſt conclude, That thoſe who have this Faith of Chriſt's *coming are mean, unlearned, and contemptible Perſons, in the Eye of the World,* excepting this Miniſter; *and that has much ſtumbled all ſorts of People. God gives the Faith to whom he pleaſes; and at* Chriſt's firſt *coming was given to Fiſhermen, and unlearned poor Creatures; and ſo He has done again, that no Fleſh may glory in His ſight. I have been larger than I thought. I reſt*

Your Affectionate and Humble

Servant and Kinſwoman,

Margaret Holms.

Upon the reading of this, I went on the 28*th* of *April*, to viſit my old Friend Mr. *Maſon* at *Water-Stratford*, with whom I had been familiarly acquainted, twenty years before. I no ſooner came into his Yard, but was ſurpriz'd with the wildneſs of unexpected Noiſes.

They

They were all ſinging, ſome to one tune and ſome to another, but ſo loud, that it could not be exact.

When I enter'd the Houſe a more melancholy Scene of a Spiritual *Bedlam* (which ſtill fills me with horror) preſented it ſelf; Men, Women and Children running up and down, one while ſtretching their Arms upwards to catch their Saviour in his coming down, others extending them forwards to meet his embraces, a third with a ſudden turn pretends to graſp him, and a fourth clapping their hands for joy they had him, with ſeveral other antick Poſtures, which made me think that *Bedlam* it ſelf was but a faint Image of their *Spiritual Phrenſies*. All this while they were ſinging as loud as their throats would give them leave, till they were quite ſpent, and look'd black in the Face.

When theſe were tir'd, in came a freſh Company, repeating the ſame Hymns, with the like noiſe and wildneſs.

At this time Mr. *Maſon* was in a darkiſh Garret upon his Bed, (and dy'd as I take it, within a Month after) and it was with ſome difficulty that I got acceſs to him; (for they had deny'd ſeveral.)

The Siſter who wrote the Letter, introduc'd me, but told me beforehand, that *he* did not care to talk

talk of his Sentiments, or Viſion; but referr'd me (as to that Matter) to his *Two Witneſſes*, who could ſay as much to it as himſelf.

He had a Week before been troubled with a Γλωσσαλγία, or a *Ranula* under his Tongue, which made him the more unwilling to talk. While I diſcours'd of common Matters, he heard me patiently, but as ſoon as I enquir'd of his Viſion, he ſign'd to his Siſter, to have me down to the Two Witneſſes, who knew all his Mind.

I went from him into a lower Chamber, where two Men, which they call'd the Witneſſes, (but I ſuppoſe one was but a Deputy, becauſe I have ſince heard, that one of the Witneſſes, who dy'd within a Week after, was ſick when I was there) met me with many Spectators.

The Witneſſes gave me the ſame Account with the Letter, That *our Lord* appeared to the *Prophet*, on the 16*th* of *April*, *&c.*

And to confirm the Truth of it, they further told me, That, at the ſame time, two Angels appeared in white, to a Man of their Society, as he was going homewards to *Great-Harwood*, and forc'd him back again.

I ask'd the Witneſſes, What was their proper Buſineſs? They anſwered, with much aſſurance, That *their Prophet* was not to bear Witneſs

of himſelf; That in the Mouth of two or three Witneſſes every Truth ſhould be eſtabliſh'd; That God would give Power to his two Witneſſes, *&c.* But the choiceſt Place was (as I remember) *Iſa.* 44. 5. *One ſhall ſay I am the Lord's, and another ſhall call himſelf by the name of Jacob, and another ſhall ſubſcribe with his hand unto the Lord, and ſir-name himſelf by the name of Iſrael:* and ſo on to the 8*th.* Verſe, *Ye are my Witneſſes.*

They witneſſed, That their Prophet was the very Perſon ſpoken of, *Rev.* 1. 1. *He ſent and ſignified it by his Angel to his ſervant John.*

They witneſſed, That Mr. *Maſon* was *that Elijah*; that *John the Baptiſt* was not *that Elijah* that was to appear before the great and terrible Day, as the *Baptiſt* ſaid I am not; therefore there were two *Elijah*'s, and therefore *John Maſon* was one.

They witneſſed farther, That their Prophet ſaw our Saviour for a conſiderable time, that *He ſaid many things, but ſpoke no words.* For His Majeſtick Looks ſaid, that he came to Judge and Condemn the greateſt part of the World; and his ſmiling Countenance ſaid, He would ſave *Sion*, and the *holy Ground*; that is, ſaid they, *Water-Stratford and its Borders.*

They could not, or would not tell me, how far the Borders would extend, but they told me that few,

few, that very few of this Land ſhould be Sav'd.

This I thought very hard, and therefore I ask'd them, What would become of ſome truly pious Perſons, that might never hear of *Water-Stratford?* To which they anſwered, That ſome of the *Elect* would be *hall'd* thither, without their conſent, by Angels. Will our Saviour (ſaid I) be viſible to all when He comes amongſt you? They reply'd, To very few: And as they ſeem'd to explain themſelves, only to the Prophet, and his Witneſſes; but with the Prophet he would daily Converſe, and be very Familiar; and His chief Reſidence would be in the Clouds. They expect Him, they aſſur'd me, every Minute, and therefore Day and Night they are upon the Watch. When our Saviour has done here, He would (they ſaid) carry *the Believers in this new Prophet*, to the *New Jeruſalem*, and gather the Elect in other places to them.

When I ask'd 'em, How Mr. *Maſon* was affected at the ſight of our Saviour? they had an Anſwer ready, That he had not the leaſt fear upon him; which, they told me, was the fulfilling of a Prophecy, *Heb.* 9. and the laſt. *He ſhall appear the ſecond time without ſin to ſalvation.*

And now I thought it time to enquire ſeriouſly, Whether it was not poſſible that their Prophet

might be deceived? To which the Sister (who had been all the while present) gravely Answer'd, with an obliging Accent; *O Sir, the Holiness of his Life makes it impossible, that God should permit him to be deceived.*

When I had given (as I thought) a due reply to this, *the Witnesses* confess'd, they did not much insist upon *that*, since the *Spirit* assur'd both the Prophet and themselves, That *He* was the very *Christ* that appear'd to him.

To this I return'd, That several have been as confident of the *Spirit's impulse* as themselves, and yet have been deceiv'd; and then they cited something out of Dr. *Owen*, That though he that has not the Spirit may think he has it, and be deceived; yet they that have it know they have it, and cannot be deceived. Like those that are in a Dream, may think themselves awake; but they that are awake are well assur'd of it. After this I ask'd, what Argument *they* had to convince the doubtful, who thought it a little unreasonable to believe such *strange matters* at second hand? What Miracles, what Signs, *&c.* But they interrupted me, and in a half-passion answer'd, This was *sign* sufficient, that all should be Sav'd that believ'd it, and they that did not, should be *destroy'd and damn'd.*

This

This began to ſtir me, and I could not forbear ſaying, *That I fear'd they were all deluded, and that they would find in a little time*, &c. But the Witneſſes would not ſuffer me to proceed, and, ſtarting up in a furious tranſport, told me, I would be (I have forgot the Word, but am ſure it meant) damn'd for my Unbelief, and ſo they avoided me.

When I came down into their Parlour, the Dancers were encreas'd in that Room to *Thirty*, or more.

They uſually entertain'd all ſorts of Vagabond-Fidlers, Singing-Boys or Wenches, and hir'd them to ſtay with them; becauſe they thought our Saviour would have all ſorts of Muſick to attend Him.

They pretended not to any Miracles, nor diſcerning of Spirits; nor need they, for they require nothing but this Faith, (That Chriſt has this Second time appear'd) in Order to Salvation.

If I had talk'd with the Prophet himſelf of theſe things, I could have had no better ſatisfaction; for the only Argument he made uſe of at that time, to any one that doubted, was ---*By the Eternal God I ſaw Him with theſe Eyes.*----*By the Living God 'tis true*, &c. As he told many that went to ſee him, and as he ſaid ſeveral times in his laſt Sermon out of the Window (the *Sunday* before I was with him) to above five hundred (ſome ſay fifteen hundred) People. He

He had for a long time left off giving the Sacrament to any, but ſome Select Perſons of his own way; and ſince the 16*th.* of *April* gave it no more, becauſe Chriſt was come. He had left off Praying, becauſe he thought nothing remained to be prayed for; and had determined to Preach no more, becauſe they ſhould be all enlightned from above.

If any Man came to him, that had formerly admir'd his Preaching or Praying, he would ask him, if he could believe that *he* ſaw Chriſt? If it was anſwer'd, that he dar'd not ſay that, but yet out of reſpect to him, was afraid to disbelieve, then he would thank God, that He had given him *ſuch a meaſure* of Faith; and asking him if he could love Chriſt, charg'd him to *get Oil.* One of his moſt conſiderable Friends (whom he much valu'd) was to ſee him, a Week or ten Days before my going; and put the Caſe home to him, telling him, He ſhould have a great care of what he ſaid, for the ſake of his many Friends, as well as upon his own account. For there were many had ſo great a reſpect for him, as to be ready to give credit to whatſoever he ſhould vent; which, in all probability, would have this ill conſequence, That if *he* ſhould, after all his confidence, prove miſtaken, they would never believe any other *Prophet before him,*

him, for his ſake. To all which Mr. *Maſon* moſt ſolemnly reply'd; *'Tis as true as any thing in ſacred Writ.*

About a Week after I had been there, another Gentleman, of his and my Acquaintance, made him a Viſit, and told him, He ought to be very cautious in talking of things thus much out of the way. But *he* anſwer'd poſitively, *As ſure as God is true I ſaw him*; and added, He firſt ſaw his back Parts, and then his Face, which was too glorious for Words to expreſs. *This Friend* then enquir'd, Whether our Saviour had ſaid any thing to him? And, receiving no anſwer, he ask'd a Clergy-man that ſtood by, Whether he underſtood that our Saviour had ſaid any thing? This anger'd Mr. *Maſon* ſo much, that he paſſionately turn'd to him; What need was there of ſaying any thing, when He has actually began His Reign?

A third Friend of his and mine went to him, within a day or two after, when he not only aſſerted the ſame things, but ſhew'd the very place where he ſtood, deſcribed the Foldings of the Gown, with the Colour of it, and declar'd the ſeveral *impreſſions* that the Spirit made upon him at the ſame time; one was, *That the crimſon Gown was dipt in the Blood of his Enemies.* This Perſon had

had a great Reverence for Mr. *Maſon*, and therefore was not free to tell me the other *Impulſes*.

I am well aſſur'd of the integrity of theſe *three* Perſons, who were his intimate Friends, or elſe they had found no admittance.

I can't omit another remarkable Inſtance of their Extravagancy, which I receiv'd from a ſober Gentleman. A Servant belonging to his Family, was ſtanding at Mr. *Maſon*'s Fire-ſide, when *he* came towards the *Chimney* with a great Roll, and (whether he burnt it or not I am uncertain) down he threw it, crying out with a loud Voice, *Fire*, *Fire*, *Fire*. This gave the Alarm to all the reſt, who ran up and down with their *firery* Exclamations for a long time after.

This Paſſage I had omitted (becauſe it came from a ſecond hand) had not the Siſter (whom I viſited with ſeveral Queries at *Water-Stratford*, on the *twenty third* of *July* laſt) in a great meaſure confirm'd it. For ſhe acknowledg'd, That in a *myſtical way* there had been *often* crying out *Fire*, to denote, (as I think ſhe ſaid) the ſuddenneſs of the Deſtruction that was coming upon the Land.

I ask'd her at the ſame time, Whether they had not often talk'd of *Sacrificing*, (for I had heard of ſeveral Stories of that nature, and ſome of them that

that ſeem'd *black*) but this was all that ſhe did acknowledge, That there had been frequent mention of Sacrificing among them, not in a carnal, but in a ſpiritual Senſe; that as formerly there was Sacrificing of Prefiguration and Expectation, ſo now they did eat the Sacrifice of (ſomewhat that ſignifi'd) *Thankſgiving*.

In truth, her Anſwers were by this time become ſo myſterious and refin'd (like *Molino*'s Diſcourſes in his *Spiritual Guide*) that ſhe made me think of the Converſe I once had with a melancholy *Roſicrucian Doctor*, whom I deſir'd, when he talk'd ſomething obſcurely, to explain himſelf; but then he was ten times more myſterious, and told me, What he ſaid was not to be underſtood without an *Angelick Underſtanding*.

The great thing I deſir'd to know of her was, Whether Mr. *Maſon* (who had been dead ſome Weeks before) had any Senſe of his Death approaching, and whether he had maintained the ſame Opinions to the laſt? I was the more inquiſitive, becauſe I had receiv'd different Repreſentations about it. She anſwer'd, That ſhe verily believ'd he had a fore-ſight of his death, becauſe he had often ſaid *in this ſickneſs, That he had fulfill'd his Miniſtry, and finiſh'd his Goſpel.* Whereas at the end of a former ſickneſs, about three quar-

ters of a Year before, he ſaid, He knew, or believ'd, he ſhould not die, becauſe he had not fulfill'd his Miniſtry, nor finiſh'd the work of the Lord. And I know, a little before he dy'd, he told his *Northamptonſhire*-Friends, That they ſhould not be ſurpriz'd if they heard he was dead.

But though he might think himſelf mortal three or four days before he dy'd, yet, I am well aſſur'd, that five or ſix Weeks before, he had thought otherwiſe; for about that time, *he* told his moſt particular Friend, That our Saviour would daily converſe with him; *and that*, 'till he went to the *New Jeruſalem*. Which made him ask *him*, whether he thought he ſhould live always, (or words to that effect) and he preſently anſwer'd, *There is here that ſhall never taſt of death.* The Siſter added, That in his former Sickneſs, toward the latter end of it, he declar'd, That he ſhould not dye at that time; becauſe ſeveral Prophecies were not verify'd. The moſt material was, *Iſa.* 33. 17. *Thine eyes ſhall ſee the King in his beauty, they ſhall behold the Land that is very far off, thine heart ſhall meditate terror.*

As to ſeveral other Queries I propounded, ſhe anſwer'd ſo obſcurely, though nevertheleſs diſcreetly, that I was enclin'd to write her a Letter about a Fortnight after; which obtain'd this Anſwer *verbatim.*

Aug.

Aug. 16*th.* 1694.

SIR,

"I Receiv'd your Letter, but muſt beg your Par-
"don in not ſending the Papers of my Bro-
"ther; for I cannot be free to lend them out, for
"many reaſons, and have deny'd to do it to a Mi-
"niſter that was his intimate Acquaintance: and
"what of them has been ſeen formerly, has ſince
"his Death been improv'd againſt him: and ſo has
"all that ever was taken out by *piece-meals*, and
"has turn'd to no account but *pecking-work againſt*
"*the Doctrine of the Kingdom.* If any Perſon would
"ſpread the Doctrine in courſe, as it was deliver'd
"in the four Years Miniſtry, then all would ſee,
"how He clear'd and prov'd all things by Scrip-
"ture, which he Preach'd. But the Papers that he
"kept by him, were but part of the Doctrine, and
"the *Midnight-Cry* contains the three parts, which
"he often Preach'd upon; That Chriſt would
"have a *Davidical Kingdom* here, and that it would
"be uſher'd in by a dreadful Tribulation, and that
"this would be done in a ſhort time. He alſo of-
"ten declar'd, That he knew himſelf to be the
"Harbinger ſent before Chriſt's Face, which ſe-
"veral Scriptures point out, that ſhould prepare
"the way of the Lord, (though he often would
"ſay, that he knew himſelf to be the Unworthieſt

" of all the Lord's Miniſters, but God ſhould have " all the glory of his grace to him, for ever.) He " declar'd that *by him* the way of the Lord was " prepar'd, and all things reſtor'd in a *miniſterial* " *way, by a declar'd Decree*; and that God had gi- " ven him *ſpecial grace* for this Work, and had *un-* " *ſeal'd* the Book to him; that was to be *ſeal'd* till " the time of the end, and had given him the *Reve-* " *lation of Jeſus Chriſt*, and the teſtimony of Jeſus, " which is the Spirit of Prophecy. He alſo de- " clar'd to us about three Weeks before he ſicken'd, " That now he had fully and wholly done the " Work, the *Lord had ſent him upon*, as to the Meſ- " ſage before Chriſt's Face, and that he had but " very few words more to ſay to us, for he ſhould " *ſoon be parted from us*, and be with Chriſt. He " told us alſo, That Chriſt had took the matter in- " to his own hands, and that he would viſibly per- " form what he had ſent him to declare; He ſaid " that God had done the part of a God to this Na- " tion, in giving them warning, and they ſhould " know that they were the *truths of the eternal God*, " that were deliver'd amongſt them, and the " words of truth and ſobriety; though the Nation " had hiſt at all, and the Devil had roar'd againſt " it, yet God would vindicate this Cauſe, and " that ſoon too. Two days after he ſicken'd, He

" began

"began to tell us, how God had pour'd in his "Loving kindneſs into his Soul, *in an extraordinary* "*manner*; and ſo it continu'd all his Sickneſs. And "the laſt words he ſpake to us were, that he was "*full of the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.* During his "ſickneſs he ſpoke but little, but what he did, "was conſtantly confirming what he had formerly "deliver'd. And to the laſt he ſtill teſtify'd, *That* "*he had ſeen the Lord*, and that it was time for this "Nation to tremble, and for Chriſtians to *trim* "*their Lamps.*

"And as to our preſent expectations (as you "deſire to know) *We believe* there will be a "change, according to the word we have had de-"livered amongſt us, and that Chriſt did really ap-"pear to my Brother, and we take it as a Seal to the "*doctrine of the Kingdom*, and as *an appearance for* "*his appearance.*

"We do believe alſo, that the Lord will ap-"pear where the word of the *Kingdom* has been "Preach'd, where the Seed of the Kingdom has "been ſown, which my Brother and others have "believ'd is meant this Seed of the Kingdom, which "is that Muſtard-Tree in which the Birds will "come and lodge in the Branches thereof, as "*Mat.* 13. 32. And *its believed* that the people "of God will be gather'd there, for *where the body*

"*is*,

"*is, thither will the Eagles be gather'd together.* And "that he will appear in *that Mountain* where he "has been waited for, as in *Iſaiah* the 25. 9, 10. "And we do believe him a Prophet ſent to this "Nation.

"Now as to the ſecond Requeſt in your Letter, "I find my ſelf very willing to ſerve you, but not "capable; For the Doctrine that my Brother deli-"ver'd was very large and weighty, and ſo are the "particulars of his Life; and I not being able to "write Senſe or Engliſh, conclude, that you will be "much troubled to read what I have writ already. "And if I ſay any thing of that honourable Mini-"ſter, I muſt ſay as hundreds more do that knew "him; That for ſoundneſs of Doctrine, for Chri-"ſtian Converſe, and for Exemplary Converſation, "he has not left his Fellow in the World. He "had ſuch *a continual Tide to ſpirituality*, ſuch a *Zeal* "*to the glory of God, and ſuch a Flame of love to Jeſus* "*Chriſt*, that I never ſaw the like upon no Man "upon Earth before. There was certainly an ex-"traordinary *effuſion* of the Spirit of God pour'd "out upon him, and he was the *ſelf-abaſingeſt* Crea-"ture that ever I knew in my life. He would "ſtoop to the neceſſities of the meaneſt, but would "not yield to the ſinful humour of the greateſt. "He would never ſpeak evil of no Man, but

"would

" would ſay to us, though you condemn practices,
" condemn not particular Perſons; for ſaid he, a
" Man that is truly humble, will never open his
" Mouth in Self-boaſting, or Cenſure of others.
" He was, like *Moſes*, meek in his own Cauſe; dead
" to Affronts, and deaf to Reproaches, and blind to
" Injuries, but a vehement Man in God's Cauſe.
" And to the *Cartload* of Reproaches that was of late
" caſt upon him, I never heard him anſwer any
" thing to them, but *Bleſſed be God that he has ac-*
" *counted me worthy to ſuffer in this honourable Cauſe.*
" He work'd in God's Service, as if he was to me-
" rit Salvation by it; but yet call'd himſelf an *un-*
" *profitable Servant.* He was of an *eaſy na-*
" *ture* in point of Civility, but of a *ſteely nature*
" in point of Sinfulneſs. He was the fierceſt Man
" in the World againſt Sin, but the pittyfulleſt
" Man to the Sinner.

" His Charity was extraordinary to poor Chri-
" ſtians, but perform'd with the greateſt Secrecy
" that poſſibly could be; and he never turn'd one
" Petitioner from his Door without an Alms, and
" moſt commonly gave them Soul-inſtruction alſo.
" Now as to his every day Exerciſe in his Family,
" I need not acquaint you, for all knew how he
" walk'd, and how ſtrict he kept the Sabbath. But
" to note particulars that were remarkable of his

" Life;

"Life, would ſwell to a large piece; and I hear, "that Mr. *Hammet*, and Mr. *Mehew*, have been "writing his Life and Doctrine, who have been "well acquainted with his Converſation theſe ma-"ny Years, and have known what a faithful Mini-"ſter of Jeſus Chriſt he was, and what extraordi-"nary ſucceſs, from firſt to laſt, God gave him *in* "*Converſion work* in his Miniſtry, and what an uni-"verſal reſpect he had for all Chriſtians; and where "he ſaw moſt of the Image of God, thoſe he loved "beſt, though they differ'd from him in Opinion. "The *Haverſham Chriſtians* are able to give a large "account of his Life from firſt to laſt, ever ſince he "enter'd into the Miniſtry; and that *honourable* "*Family* alſo can give you an account of a good "part of his Life, therefore I ſhall ſay no more "From, Sir,

Your humble Servant,

M. Holms.

This is a faithful repreſentation of the matter of fact, in anſwer to my *firſt Letter*.

The *ſecond* obliges me to expreſs Mr. *Maſon*'s Character, which is but neceſſary, ſince the Reports concerning him are very different; ſome make him no leſs than an Apoſtle, and others ſpeak

ſpeak him a moſt horrid Impoſtor; many have thought him divinely inſpir'd, and not a few judg'd him to be diabolically poſſeſt.

On my firſt Enquiries, the accounts were indeed ſo various, that I could liken them to nothing better, than to ſome Pictures I have ſeen of a Saint, or a Devil, according to the different light to which they were expos'd.

But theſe different Repreſentations have enabl'd me to make a better diſcovery, by engaging me to trace every ſtory to its firſt original; and to examine (more narrowly) the credit of the firſt Informer. And therefore I promiſe (for I am ſure I can make it good) to deſcribe him in his proper Colours, and to ſet him in a true light; and if it ſhould happen (as I foreſee it will) that ſome ſtrokes be wanting for a perfect Piece, it is *upon my integrity* to make it the more exactly agreeable to the Original.

When he was at School at *Strixton* in *Northamptonſhire*, his earneſt Spirit that was then diſcoverable, made his Maſter often ſay, That if he liv'd, he was like to be a violent Zealot. When he remov'd to *Clare-Hall*, he had the repute of good Parts, but I have been well inform'd, by a Letter from a Clergyman in *Northamptonſhire* (Mr. *Gray*, who was his Chamber-Fellow at *Cambridge*) dated

Sept. 22. that he was but careleſs in ſome part of his Life there, that he would be ſometimes ſtarting of Queſtions, in reference to the uſages of the Church of *England* (which ſeem'd to diſcover ſome diſſatisfaction) and with greater earneſtneſs, than points diſcours'd only for diſpute ſake are ordinarily manag'd. His removal from *Cambridge* was firſt to *Iſham* in *Northamptonſhire*, where he liv'd with Mr. *Sawyer*. I have been told by his Friends, that he ſtudied there moſt part of the Nights, and when 'twas ſaid it would do him hurt, he anſwer'd, That he had loſt his time at the Univerſity, and muſt regain it. His frequent ſaying in his Pulpit (according to his familiar way of Preaching) *here ſtands one that has been as great a Sinner as any of you till it pleaſed God to open his Eyes*, ſeems to confirm the account of his Chamber-Fellow, concerning his behaviour in the College; for from that time he was moſt certainly a Man of ſevere Morals.

Mr. *Sawyer* (at preſent of *Kettering*) gave me this account of him, in a Letter dated *Octob.* the firſt. That whilſt he liv'd with him, he was induſtrious in his ſtudies toward the ſupply of Academical Learning, and needed rather a Bridle than a Spur, that his Sobriety and Piety was very exemplary, that his endeavours were earneſt, both in Family and Pariſh, to do thoſe things that were honeſt,

honeſt, juſt, *&c.* and that with a moſt chearful Spirit, freed from moroſeneſs, or Enthuſiaſm.

In *Buckinghamſhire* he lived ſeveral Years, very near me; and the Families, in which we liv'd, being nearly related, I had frequent and intimate Diſcourſes with him.

In his Principles, he was a rigid *Calviniſt*, and not a little inclining to *Antinomianiſm*. 'Tis almoſt twenty Years ſince, that we diſcourſed eagerly about St. *Peter* and *Judas*; and he would acknowledge no other difference betwixt *them*, but what *decrees* and *irreſiſtible Grace* had made. At another time we were no leſs earneſt upon *Imputation*, *&c.* and for a Concluſion to our Diſcourſe upon that ſubject, he deliberately aſſerted, and repeated it, That *it was all one whether he had kept the Commandments, or broke them all, ſince Chriſt had obſerv'd them.*

His Preaching did commonly border upon the Predeſtinarian Points, and did often make his Hearers Melancholy, and now and then in danger of Deſpair. Very long, and very earneſt he always was in the Pulpit, ſo earneſt, as not to leave a dry thread about him, as his neareſt Friends aſſur'd me, and ſo long, as to be always ready to faint before he gave over.

This, with his good Life, and novelty of his

Doctrine, procur'd him many Followers.

After his two Sermons he commonly repeated in the Evening, to a great number that throng'd to hear him, and there were few days in which there were not ſome with him to propound their doubts. But how he could reſolve them from *his* Principles, he never would tell me.

As for his Morals, I muſt needs ſay, he had ſuch a *(naturæ bonitas)* complexional goodneſs, as ſecur'd him from the bad effects of ill Principles. He was a Perſon of as great Devotion as ever I met with, and his main aim was to make all he convers'd with to be religious. I think verily he was not only temperate but mortify'd, not only true and juſt, but kind and charitable. Charitable to the good Name, as well as to the Soul and Body. He was *nec iracundus nec irritabilis*, very affable in his Carriage, Meek in his Converſe, and never over-earneſt, unleſs (where he thought he could not exceed) for God.

The Family where he liv'd for many Years, and which he ſince often viſited, very lately told me, They thought him as free from Vanity, as others could be from Vice; and that they could never ſee wherein he did too much, or where too little. I cannot indeed ſay ſo much, yet am ready to think, that all his Redundancies as well as Defects, were deſign'd in order to a greater good. His

His Prayers were always vehement, and an awful ſilence, betwixt every Petition, doubl'd their length, with a ſort of divine breathings. He affected a laborious way of Addreſs, or elſe 'tis impoſſible to imagine but that the frequent habit (tho' he had receiv'd no extraordinary aſſiſtance) muſt have given him a greater facility to expreſs himſelf. He did never (that I could hear of) ſpeak directly againſt the Prayers of the Church; but as he made uſe of ſome of them in publick, ſo (when his head would not ſuffer him to pray in his Family) if he could not perſwade any with him, to *extemporize*, he would then deſire them to read ſome *Collects* of the Common-Prayer, which he ſaid were very good. He was once diſcourſing with a very ſober Perſon of the difference betwixt a Form of Prayers, and no Form, when he thus expreſt himſelf. *Both are very liable to be abus'd. No Form* was apt to make Men Vain-glorious, but a Form was apt to make them careleſs.

His parts were once above the common level, but the ill conceptions that he entertain'd (and indulg'd) of the Almighty, and his dealings, did certainly ſo beſot him, that he was not capable of a free thought, or a rais'd contemplation. Much muſing and heavy thinking made him always liable to the contagion of the body's ſteam.

He

He was ſeldom free from violent pains in his Head, and troubled with *vapours* in an exceſſive manner. His Legs and Feet were often ſo very cold, that two or three hours rubbing could ſcarce procure any ſenſible heat. Tho' he lay in his Stockins and wore Boots, yet he was almoſt conſtantly benum'd in thoſe parts.

His Head was often ſo much out of order, that he could not bear the leaſt noiſe, and when he heard his Sons read, it was by way of whiſper. He was forced ſometimes to quit his own Houſe, and to live in an unfrequented part of a large Houſe, near me, where he ſcarce ventur'd to walk for fear of the noiſe of his own tread, nor could he pray in the Family (tho' it was his chief delight) at thoſe times, leſt he ſhould diſturb his brain with the ſound of his own words.

He much affected the converſation of melancholy Perſons, and had particularly contracted a moſt intimate acquaintance with one Mr. *Wrexham*, that was come to *Haverſham*, (Mr. *Maſon*'s beloved place.)

A melancholy Divine indeed *he* was, and very often *diſturb'd*. *He* had beſtow'd much time and pains in compiling a more exact and compleat Scripture Chronology (as he thought) than is yet extant. When he had perfected the Work, he offer'd

offer'd it to the then Biſhop of *Lincoln*, to be perus'd, and as he hop'd, approv'd. But it fell out otherwiſe, and the reproof he there met with, for waſting ſo much time and pains in a fruitleſs ſtudy, was ſo much laid to heart, as to haſten his diſtraction, which happen'd not long after. This Mr. *Wrexham* (who was ſometimes with Mr. *Maſon*, for a quarter of a year together) was, as he himſelf own'd, the very Man that put him firſt upon *Revelation Thoughts*.

His death fill'd Mr. *Maſon* with exceſſive *grief*, and the loſs of his own moſt prudent Wife, before he had well digeſted *it*, made it ſo overflow, that he never rightly enjoy'd himſelf after it.

For his laſt four years (which I look upon as his *Apparatus* to his *Millennium*) he thought himſelf often acted by a *Divine impulſe*, and tho' he would ſometimes write down the Sermons for the following Lord's Day (as he had formerly done) upon ſome other theme; yet he had no ſooner ended his Prayer, but he would tell his People, that the Spirit mov'd him to diſcourſe of the *myſtery of the Kingdom*, and of nothing elſe.

Thus he went on till laſt *April*, when he did φθυτασιοσοφεῖν (as the word is us'd *Ecclus.* 4. 30.) think all his Imaginations to be certainties; and from that time he contracted (as he thought) ſuch

ſuch a Friendſhip with God, as might warrant him to deſpiſe Men. For from that very time his *good nature* left him, he became froward in his Converſe, reſerv'd in Diſcourſe, and impatient of a Contradiction; yea, and ſeem'd to damn all Mankind but a few in his own way; and thus he continu'd to his laſt Minutes.

There are, I know, ſome ſerious and good Men, that will be ready to object (from common Report) againſt one part of the Character relating to his Morals: And there are, I acknowledge, ſeveral Stories banded up and down that look reflectingly that way: But on my word I have examin'd them all, and find many of them to be mere invention, and others to be but empty cavils.

There are but Two, that I can hear of, that are any ways conſiderable, and thoſe I ſhall duly conſider.

The former is a common Report that he did all this to get Money (τὸ μὲν κακὸν γὰρ πᾶν φιλάργυρον γένος, *Soph. Antig.*) for your *new light Men* are generally covetous.

For an inſtance of this they tell a ſolemn Story of a Woman that came to abide amongſt them, and Mr. *Maſon*, they ſay, ſent her back again for Money, that ſhe return'd home, broke open her Husband's Trunk, brought the Money, and was well

well receiv'd. This Story I have examin'd, and thus much by their own confeſſion is in it, and I am apt to think no more, *viz.* That about a Year ſince, a Woman that was his admirer, being told of a Deſolation coming upon the Land, and believing there was no place of Security but at *Stratford*, did break open a Drawer of her Husbands, where the Money was that ſhe had earn'd in Nurſing, and laid it up in Mr. *Maſon*'s Houſe. But I was aſſur'd by the Siſter (who I think would not deceive me) that Mr. *Maſon* knew nothing of it; for of late he had not concern'd himſelf in Money Matters, any otherwiſe than to keep a little in his Pocket to give the Poor.

In Truth, I think he was always as far from Covetouſneſs as any Man living; and the little Proviſion he made for his Children, (notwithſtanding his Frugality, and his Teaching School ſometimes,) is, I think, a demonſtration. He could not deſign Riches in gathering People to him, becauſe there were ſeveral Poor among them, that had little other Subſiſtence beſides *their* Charity: And I am well inform'd, That ſeveral who had contracted Debts before they came thither, were there Arreſted, and had their Debts paid amongſt them. And I was particularly told by one of *Northampton*, That a Relation of his, who had ſcarce

Bread to eat in the dear time, went thither purely for Subſiſtence, and pretending only (when a perfect Stranger to them) to be of their Party, far'd well for a Week, and then return'd home.

There is another Objection, that has been often urg'd againſt his Sincerity, of this nature, *viz.* That whereas he has at leaſt pretended to a *Divine Impulſe* for theſe laſt four Years, *which* oblig'd him to Diſcourſe of the *New Kingdom*, yet whenever it happen'd that he preach'd any where out of his uſual Circuit, he would handle other Subjects, and talk like other Men.

But to this I anſwer, That he did not pretend to be wholly acted by the Spirit in every Diſcourſe; and he often ſaid, *That the Myſteries of the Kingdom were not to be reveal'd to the unprepared, leſt it ſhould expoſe the Myſteries to ridicule, and the Perſons to a greater Judgment.* Milk for Babes.

There are, I grant, ſome other Objections to be made againſt him, but they do not ſo immediately reflect upon his Morals, as to prove he had any corrupt deſign. And though I deny him to be a Counterfeit, I grant him to be culpable. But this I think may be ſufficient for the preſent, in anſwer to my *Second Letter.*

The

The Third deſires my Judgment of the nature of the Impulſes and Viſion to which he pretended, and what might be the occaſions of 'em?

I Anſwer,

1. As to the Impulſes and Viſion I am throughly ſatisfied 'twas mere Deluſion, upon theſe Accounts.

1. Becauſe he has been formerly liable to Miſtakes of this kind, for which take this Inſtance.

Ten or Twelve Years ſince Mr. *Oliver Paſhler*, a ſober Divine, of *Buckingham*, within Two Miles of *Water-Stratford*, walk'd with his Wife to give him a neighbourly Viſit; they had no ſooner enter'd the Houſe, but Mr. *Maſon* told Mrs. *Paſhler*, ſhe was very kind to let him ſee her *twice* in one Day. She was at firſt a little ſurpriz'd, and made anſwer, ſhe had not ſeen him before for a long time. Then he grew poſitive, and ſaid, *You know very well that you walk'd by my Horſe ſide for ſeveral Furlongs together, this very Morning, as I came from* Haverſham, *and we diſcours'd ſo and ſo*, &c. This put her into a great fright, and made her beg of her Husband to go home immediately, *for her Ghoſt was ſeen, and ſhe ſhould not live.*

Mrs. *Maſon* (a truly good Wife) ſeeing her in a great concern, deſir'd her, for God's ſake, not to be frightned, nor to take any notice of what her

Husband ſaid, *for it was nothing elſe but one of Mr.* Maſon's *melancholy Fancies, and he was often ſubject to 'em.*

This Relation Mr. *Paſhler* has formerly mentioned to me, and ſeveral others; and two Months ſince he told me the particulars.

The caſe is here ſo plain, that I need only obſerve that his coming directly from a Melancholy ſort of People, and his eager Diſcourſing and Praying with them, had over-heat his Brain, rais'd the Fumes, and ſtirr'd the Vapours in an extraordinary manner. He that in his early Years could be thus miſtaken at mid-day, might more eaſily be now deluded at mid-night.

2. I am well aſſur'd that *the Impulſes*, which he, and his Witneſſes ſo much talk'd of, were not Divine, from the wretched Interpretation that they gave of Scripture, which we are ſure was dictated by a Divine Spirit.

I could produce many Inſtances, but thoſe mention'd in the Diſcourſe I had with them are too plain to need more.

What could be more ridiculous than his and their Explication of *Heb.* 9. *ult. He ſhall appear without ſin.* That is, ſay they, Mr. *Maſon ſhall have no ſenſe of his ſins.*

In

In the Year 1669. he Preach'd and Printed a Funeral Sermon on this Text, and then he could give a rational ſenſe of the words, which he thus explain'd. Chriſt's firſt appearance was very mean, He appear'd as the Son of Man, or rather as a Worm, a reproach of Men, all that ſaw him laugh'd him to ſcorn, but hereafter he ſhall appear as the God of Glory, and the Judge of the quick and dead. In the days of his fleſh he appear'd as a Priſoner at *Pilat*'s Bar, and as a Malefactor on the Croſs. Then indeed he ſtood charg'd with the ſins of his People, but *in the day of Judgment* he ſhall appear without ſin unto their Salvation. *Sed quantum mutatus!* He that fooliſhly interprets the Spirit's dictates (I am certain) has not the Spirit.

3. 'Tis evident, that neither the *impulſes* nor *appearance* was divine, from the ill influence that they had upon the perſons affected.

He who before could diſcourſe calmly, and ſeem'd, for his Meekneſs, to be a ſecond *Moſes*, does now, under pretence of divine inſpiration, diſclaim the uſe of reaſon, and imperiouſly dictates his own wilful imagination to the World for certain and undiſputable Revelation.

It has been well urg'd againſt the truth of ſome Men's Religion, that it makes the Man worſe that heartily eſpouſes it. And can it be thought, that

that

that perſuaſion deſcended from above which marr'd (as I have thought) one of the beſt tempers in the World;

What he was before I have already ſaid, (nothing but obligation) but of late he was ſo chang'd as to damn the greateſt part of the Nation, and to encloſe God's love within the petty confines of his own Sect. He was impatient of a contradiction, he would not hear an Argument, and what was worſe, he told (I am ſure) his choiceſt Friends, *That the Books were ſeal'd and there was no place for repentance.*

This I think is enough in anſwer to the former part of my *Third Letter*, which deſir'd my ſenſe of the Impulſes and Viſion; I proceed in the next place to give my Sentiments of the occaſions.

1. He that has read the ſhort character I have given of him, will find ſuch a Chain of Cauſes, and concurrence of occaſions, that he muſt needs confeſs, that nothing leſs than a conſtant guard over himſelf, could, without a miracle, have ſecur'd him from this, or the like *infatuation.*

We ſee from the very beginning of his life, that he labour'd under the burthen of his own *Idioſyncraſy*, or pecular temperament. *This* I know he miſtook for an advantage, which made his condition the more dangerous. *This* again was more opera-

operative from the ſtinging impreſſions that a ſenſe of his early miſcarriages had left upon his Mind. His grief was further heighten'd from the diſmal *Idea* he had form'd of God, as if he had made Mankind on purpoſe to damn the major part; and his frequent Converſe with Men of the ſame kidney, fix'd his Error, and made him obnoxious to the *contagion of ecſtatick Fits.* Vid. *Baron.* & *Ful.* Miſcel. *Meſſaliani.*

There may be, I grant, ſome valuable Perſons who are lightly touch'd with the apprehenſion of Abſolute Reprobation, *&c.* and may (as they think) make it ſerve to ſome ſerious purpoſes; but he that ruminates upon it, and converts it *in Sanguinem & ſuccum*, as our Friend did, muſt either Deſpond or Prophecy. See Dr. *Jackſon*, Chap. 51. of the 3*d.* Tome, *Tit. Inordinate Liberty*, &c.

The Converſe I have had with ſeveral Deſpairing Creatures upon this very account, makes me to inſiſt the more upon it: For I cannot ſee any rational Comfort that can be adminiſtred to any that believe this Doctrine, becauſe they naturally interpret every Providence againſt themſelves. One concluded he ſhould be damn'd becauſe he met with no *Afflictions* here; and others, who have had great *Afflictions*, look'd upon 'em as earneſts of the Damnation to which they were predeſtinated.

ted. There was one indeed, who had thought her Reprobation was determin'd, became *reſcu'd* by a ſignal Providence.

As ſhe was tempted to make away with her ſelf, ſhe ſaw her Child fall into the River, and ſav'd it. I went to ſee her the ſame Morning, thinking it might ſerve for a good handle to *reſcue* her. I told her, when I found her exceſſive melancholy, That ſhe had as much reaſon as any body to believe ſhe was *elected*, becauſe God had made uſe of her to ſave the Child. And this conſideration (while the thing was freſh) took ſo with her, that preſently ſhe became ſatisfy'd, and is now perfectly well, capable of ſound Doctrine and good Advice.

To proceed,

His exceſſive *Vapours* were a no leſs natural cauſe of his windy Conceptions: He was ſo far ſenſible of his being that way infeſted, that he complain'd much of 'em to his Friend Mr. *Ives*, when he gave him a Viſit ten or twelve days before he dy'd. But to convince him that *they* had no influence upon his Judgment, he explain'd his Doctrine to him, and ſo betray'd himſelf. I am ſure (ſaid he) that *Chriſt* is now entering upon his Reign here, as really and truly as ever King *Charles*, King *James*, or King *William* Reign'd; *but*

but miſtake me not, for I do not mean that he will ſit in the Parliament-Houſe, &c. This made Mr. *Ives* adviſe him to let Blood ſpeedily, not ſo much out of hopes of working a Cure (for he found he was too far gone for that) as to prevent his growing worſe.

Theſe Vapours having made him uncapable of a ſober uſe of his Faculties, he became diſpos'd for a *new Light*, or for any thing that was out of the way. He believed, and often diſcours'd it, That Divine Inſpiration was no ſtrange thing, and he inſtanc'd commonly in Arch-Biſhop *Uſher*, as a Man divinely inſpired, and was under diſmal apprehenſions of a Prophecy that was much talk'd of, under his Name.

But theſe were but the beginnings of Diſtraction: His Friend, Mr. *Wrexham*, had taught him to be mad by Book; (let it not ſeem light, for I cannot forbear ſaying it, becauſe I know it to be true,) and the loſs of his good Wife made him continually deſcant upon the *New-found-Ground*, 'till he became compleat Maſter of the Crotchets.

His chiefeſt Friends have very lately aſſur'd me, That the *Millenary-Notion* was wholly owing to Mr. *Wrexham*; and that he never truly indulg'd Melancholy (though he was often liable to it) 'till

his Wife (a Woman of more than ordinary diſcretion, as well as Piety) departed this Life. I muſt add, That I well know that Mr. *Maſon* did not only receive the *Notion* of the *Millennium* from Mr. *Wrexham*, but the very *Year* when it would commence; (he was by the way confident of the Year, though he would determine nothing of the Day:) to prove this I have not only the Teſtimony of *his* chief Friends, but Mr. *Wrexham*'s *Chronological Talent* to refer to.

Alſted (I well remember'd) in his *Chronology*, had fix'd it for this Year 1694. And while I was upon the Enquiry, Whether Mr. *Wrexham* had been converſant in this *Millenarian Author*, (though I had reaſon to ſuppoſe it, becauſe my Learned Friend, that gave me his Character, had told me ſcarce any *Chronology*-Writer had eſcap'd him) my *Bookſeller* at *Northampton* ſends me the very Book that was Mr. *Wrexham*'s, and his Name in the firſt Page, with ſeveral Notes and References under his own Hand-writing. 'Tis needleſs, I think, to cite much out of him, for there is ſcarce a Page where he explains the Viſions and Prophecies, but we find frequent mention of the Year 1694. (See p. 146. p. 148. and 484. *Ab hoc currente Anno* 1623. *uſq; ad* 1694. *erit protaſis ſive præparatio ad mille annos Apocalypticos, quibus elapſis incipiet bellum Gog*

Gog & Magog, & hoc excipiet illuſtris ille adventus Domini ad judicium.)

I will add farther, (though here I am not certain) That I verily think from what I have heard and conſider'd, that I can aſſign the cauſe of the believ'd appearance on that very Day it happen'd, or rather the Night preceding, the 16*th.* of *April* laſt.

As I urge not this for Matter of certainty, ſo I would not be thought to reflect upon Mr. *Maſon* in it as a deſigning Cheat; but I do it to give a probable Account at leaſt, How he that was capable of any falſe impreſſion, became deluded at that particular time, *viz.* on *Sunday*-Night, or *Monday*-Morning.

His coldneſs to the *Church Prayers* I have already hinted, and have in part ſaid, that I meant by it, an indifferency rather than an averſion.

For he conſtantly obſerv'd, as far as I can learn, the great Days of the *Nativity*, *Reſurrection*, &c. and always was well pleas'd to read the *Epiſtles* and *Goſpels* belonging thereto, And he did moſt eſpecially commend the *Collects* of any part of *Divine Service.*

The *Reſurrection* being commemorated but the Week before, the *Meditation* upon it was very natural to a devout Soul; and Mr. *Maſon* being fully

poſſeſt with an Aſſurance of his Appearing would naturally expect it as a thing in courſe after his Reſurrection.

This (as I ſuppoſe) runs in his mind for the whole Week, and when the next *Sunday* comes, (the firſt after *Eaſter*) he reads the Goſpel, *John* 20. 19.

The ſame day at evening, being the firſt day of the week, when the doors were ſhut, where the Diſciples were aſſembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jeſus and ſtood in the midſt, and ſaith unto them, Peace be unto you; and when he had ſo ſaid, He ſhew'd unto them his hands, and his ſide. Then were the Diſciples glad when they ſaw the Lord. Then ſaid Jeſus to them again, Peace be unto you; as my Father hath ſent me, even ſo ſend I you: And when he had ſaid this, he breath'd on them, and ſaith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghoſt: Whoſe ſoever ſins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whoſe ſoever ſins ye retain, they are retained.

This being *pat* to his long ſurmizings, gives him a freſh heat, and more vigorous expectations; And when the day, and he (I ſhould have ſaid the faſting day, for he would eat nothing on *Sundays* that he might make room for vapours, which he verily

verily believ'd to be inſpiration) were quite ſpent with earneſt Prayers and tedious repetitions, he naturally became all ecſtacy nd trance.

Down he lyes (and before his uſual hour as the Divine, *&c.* obſerves in a late Pamphlet) and doſes on the Goſpel he had lately read, which makes ſo powerful an impreſſion on his Brain, that when he ſeems to awake betwixt twelve and one (as near as I can learn) He believes the Viſion he had in his Fit to be a reality; yea, and thinks that he ſtill ſaw it. This no one will wonder at, that has obſerv'd how frequent it is for Children, after ſome terrible dream, to cry bitterly, even after they are awake and their Eyes open. Tho' we bring them a Candle (as Mr. *Maſon* had one by him) they ſtill believe they ſee with their Eyes, what they ſaw in their Dream, and 'tis a long time before we can quiet them and a longer before we can undeceive them. He that ſhall read *Caſaubon*'s third Chapter may ſee enough to prove, that 'tis not at all matererial in point of Apparition, whether the ſpecies comes to the Eyes from without, or from within.

Thus I have, as I take it, given at one view a ſeries of occaſions to this *ſurprizing novelty*. I will now inſiſt upon ſome particulars.

2 His long and earneſt *expectation* of our ſaviour's Bodily preſence did promote the *deluſion*, whether we

we look upon't as a *mere Dream*, or a *waking fancy*; whether we ſuppoſe it a *ſtrong imagination*, or a *real apparition* of one of thoſe ſpirits, that can with eaſe transform themſelves into Angels of Light.

One in his circumſtances might eaſily be impos'd on any of theſe ways, without any reflection upon his ſincerity.

We are all ſenſible how natural it is for us to dream of thoſe things we *expect*, and according to the earneſtneſs of the expectation it makes a proportionable impreſſion upon us. When we expect with Fear, after we have *acted* a Sleep for ſome time, and begin but to ſleep in *earneſt*; the Enemy approaches, and inſtead of a repoſe we find our ſelves clogg'd with ſuch a dreadful weight, and our heads fill'd with ſuch diſmal Scenes, that when we awake we are all Confuſion, and continue ſo for a long time after, though we do all we can to recollect our ſelves.

But if we *expect* any thing with an earneſt deſire of it, we are not only more certain to have it preſented to us in our Dreams, (*Quæ enim quiſq; impenſe expetit, quæq; fixius animo menteq; concipit, ea in ſomnio meditatur, earumq; rerum ſpecies noctu obverſantur*, ſays *L. Lemnius*,) but we are like to doſe on, becauſe we are in love with the *Phantom*, and would prolong the pleaſure, and deceive our ſelves.

This

This may have been the caſe of our ſick-brain'd Viſioniſt; whilſt his Fancy was working upon the common Theme, it might whirl him into a kind of a doſing Fit, 'twixt ſleeping and waking, (in which poſture 'tis likely he finiſh'd his rude draught,) not ſo far awake as to exerciſe his reaſon, nor ſo ſoundly aſleep as to hinder his confidence. *He remember'd, he ſaid, That he turn'd himſelf in his Bed but a little before, and he was certain, that he ſlept not after 'till he ſaw the Beloved.* And the ſight was ſo entertaining, that he could not but love the diſtempers that occaſion'd it.

That which another would have call'd a hot Head, palpitation of Heart, or by the *Gentile* name of Vapours, he preſently *chriſtens* an impreſſion from above, a Spiritual Impulſe, and a Divine Afflatus.

And then, as my Account was, (though the *Divine*, *&c.* ſays, that he ſlept firſt,) He call'd up the Family of Expectants, who were as ready to Believe, as he could be to tell them, and the more they believ'd, the more was he confirm'd.

I was lately giving this account of the Matter to a worthy Gentleman, that much valu'd him, who was of the ſame mind with me, and confirm'd the thought by an agreeable Story of his own Lady, that expected, and dreamt, and was equally confident,

fident, 'till ſhe had receiv'd a demonſtration to the contrary. It was, as ſhe told me, a lucky miſtake, for 'till that time (which was but the Week before) ſhe was enclin'd to believe Mr. *Maſon*, and his Wonders.

But thoſe who are unwilling to believe he was half aſleep, becauſe they heard him Swear the contrary, may, if they pleaſe, no leſs rationally, believe, That he had, by much thinking about it, drawn the perfect figure in his own imagination, and that his earneſt deſire had as confidently ſet it afore him.

I have known even a fearful expectation do much, and work wonders of this nature. A Lady, in a Family where I was very converſant, after the death of her beloved Child, had ſuch fears of Death, that the picture of it was always before her; and ſhe was poſſeſs'd with the belief of it to that degree, that when ſhe was invited abroad to divert the Fancy, ſhe would proteſt almoſt every ten ſteps, ſhe ſaw Death in every thing ſhe look'd on. And would often (to convince the Company that ſhe was not miſtaken) call to the Coach-man to ſtop, and make the Servant bring the *Pebble* to the Coach, which ſhe verily thought was a *Death's Head.*

But

But our Fears (as I have already ſaid) are not ſo good at painting as our Hopes, where we meet with no Colluctation, and where every thing helps to uphold the Fancy and nothing to oppoſe it.

He that has a confident expectation of the beloved Good, (whether he has grounds for it or not) ſhall ſcrew his Imagination into the poſſeſſion of it, and ſee it, and enjoy it, by an anticipation. But if ſome ſhall ſtill think (as I find they do) that it could be nothing leſs than an Apparition indeed and indeed, then I ſay further, That the earneſt expectation will abundantly ſatisfie how it might be occaſion'd by that *evil Spirit*, who well knows how to delude the Senſe and mock the Fancy.

The *Devil*, tho' he was long ſince degraded, and expell'd thoſe bliſsful Regions (and ſo loſt his glory) for misbehaviour, remains ſtill a cunning Sophiſter, as his name imports; and the many thouſand years experience of ſuch an *active Spirit*, cannot but have improv'd his Knowledge to an *immenſe degree*.

They (one or other of them at leaſt) can never be thought ignorant of every Man's Conſtitution; and no doubt but they hold a mutual Correſpondence to find out every Man's blind ſide.

Nor is it to be doubted but that they do moſt particularly confer Notes, conſult all their Politicks, and unite all their Forces to attack the Perſon

that means well, that is good in the main, and moſt ardently breaths after the things of a *divine life*.

Thoſe ſubtle Spirits need not be told, that even *good* Men are ſooneſt decoy'd into a ſnare, by ſuch as are of a Feather with themſelves, that Error will ſooner be entertain'd from a Pious, than Truth from a Prophane Perſon; and that the Meſſengers of *Satan*, dreſs'd in the true *Apoſtolick Livery*, may ſpread the infection of Error *incognito*, and under ſpecious Diſguiſes.

It is *their Nature*, *their Eſſence*, (if I may ſo ſpeak) to ſhow their ſpight and malice *to him eſpecially that* is any thing *God-like*: And if they find him *too wiſe* and *good* to forſake his integrity, they ſhall drive the *Nail* that will go, and ſmite him with a Notion that will *chaſe away* Sobriety.

They that think to diſcern the Spirit, ſays Dr. *Jackſon*, without more ado, by his way of breathing, may, inſtead of him, be troubled with an unwelcom Gueſt, always ready to invite himſelf *where* he ſees *preparation* made for his better---The Devil has learn'd many ways of *Salutation and Addreſs*, able to fill *empty Breaſts*, or *ſhallow Heads*, unſettled in *Truth*, with ſuch pleaſant, mild and gentle *blaſts*, as are apt to breed ſtrong perſuaſions of more than *angelical Inſpirations*. God grant, ſays he, in the next

next words, the carriage of enſuing times may argue theſe Admonitions needleſs.

3. Another occaſion of this Deluſion might proceed from his *daily converſe with men of ordinary parts, and with mean Souls, that were taken with Novelty, and immediately expected a new Heaven, and a new Earth.*

He ſeldom or never would Diſcourſe with Men of Senſe upon theſe things, but with poor ignorant Creatures of *great Faith*, (ſuch as 'twas) but of little *Reaſon.*

Here I grant he deſign'd well, to bring the *poor* to the Kingdom of Heaven, and thought it more becoming to give than to receive. But this mean Converſe with ſhallow Admirers, ſok'd him *farther* in his *profound depths*, and the immediate impreſſion that his Notions made upon *their eaſie and purely paſſive minds*, help'd to perſuade *him* that it was from God.

That this was his way, I am very certain, and it has been a repeated Objection to me againſt his Integrity, *That he ſeldom aſſociated himſelf with men of ſenſe, and when he did, he would wave all Diſcourſes of an elevated Nature, and talk like other men.*

The Objection I have already Anſwer'd; that which I at preſent urge, is, That a Man's parts will *ruſt* if they have not ſometimes the *whet* of a generous Converſation, and in this condition, he will

either be over-run with Melancholy, whileſt he Converſes only with the grim Viſages and griſly Shades of his diſturb'd Phancy; or elſe he will become vain and empty, toſs'd to and fro with every *flatus*.

4. I may add, that one thing more which help'd forward the Deluſion was from his taking too much *Tobacco*. This he thought an innocent entertainment, and therefore he indulg'd it: But 'tis natural for frail Man to delight himſelf too much in that which nouriſhes his Diſeaſe. I ſeldom viſited him but he was envelop'd in clouds of Smoke, and this, amongſt other things, over-heat his Brain, and kindled that Zeal which wrought it ſelf into *new Light and Prophecy*.

I the rather mention this, becauſe his chiefeſt Friend did aſcertain me of the Truth of it. For upon my enquiry, Whether he was at all times alike full of Rapture? It was preſently anſwer'd, That generally, while he ſmok'd, he was in a kind of *Eccſtacy*, and all his People flock'd about him to receive his Communications. It made me think of blind *Homer*, and his gaping Poets.

And ſo much *for my Third Letter*.

The *Fourth* enquires how it may conſiſt with the Divine Goodneſs to permit a Perſon *of no ill meaning* to fall into ſo great Deluſion?

This

This Query, I confeſs, was propos'd to me in ſome-what a different Dreſs; for inſtead of a Perſon *of no ill meaning*, they propounded it, *how a perſon ſincerely good*, &c. But the Word *Sincerity*, when apply'd to an *Enthuſiaſt*, is liable to an *arreſt*. And therefore I ſhall firſt give my Reaſon why I decline it in the preſent caſe.

1. He that is perfectly Sincere, will not only avoid all known Evil, (as I hope Mr. *Maſon* did) but will ſuſpect his private Judgment, and do all he can to know the Truth; in which particular it is to be fear'd that *he* was much defective.

Dr. *More*, in his *Treatiſe of Enthuſiaſm*, though he is ſome-what tender of ſome *Enthuſiaſtical* Perſons, yet he cannot but grant that the extravagancies of moſt of them, are occaſion'd through their own Fault, and the Guilt lies at their own doors. There is an irregularity or vitioſity of the Will, acceſſary to this Diſtemper, whereof Temperance, prudent Refreſhment, Humility and Attention to ſober Reaſon, would either be a Prevention, or a Cure. Now the neglect of theſe are in ſome degree or other culpable, and ſo far evil, and ſo far the perſon is not perfectly Sincere.

Though they are violently, yet they are not irreſiſtably aſſaulted by their own Complexion. I confeſs indeed, That it ſeems hard at firſt ſight, that

that Reaſon, after its utmoſt efforts, ſhould be ſo liable to the vigour of the *Phantaſms*, and ſhould be ſo far captivated by *'em*, as to liſt it ſelf under the Enemy's Colours, and fight on the contrary ſide. Of which there are ſeveral inſtances in *Caſaubon*; and Dr. *More* ſpeaks of *David George*, and others, that were grave and ſedate in Speech, and engaging in Converſation, as much as Mr. *Maſon* could be.

But to this I would offer two things.

1. That Melancholy does occaſion ſometimes a particular, tho' not a total Eclipſe of the Light of Reaſon; and then, tho' all the other powers of the Mind act wonderfully well, yet here is an incurable flaw 'till Time, or Care, or Providence remove it. Now theſe Perſons, as they are not to be flatly term'd *Inſincere*, neither can they properly be call'd *Sincere*, being craz'd *quoad hoc*, and have the ſad comfort of *Hercules furens ſolus te jam præſtare poteſt furor inſontem.*

2. The other thing that I would offer, is, That Men are ſtrangely apt to dandle the Children of their own Brain, to cheriſh their amuſing *Phantaſms* and *Imaginations*, which they at firſt begot in the Mind, by unreaſonable Faſtings or Rigours, (thinking it unlikely that their ſhould be a bad effect of ſo good a cauſe) by too intenſe Meditation,

tion, by over-curious and anxious enquiries into future Events, by fanciful conceits of new Diſcoveries, by moroſe Zeal, *&c.* Here, I ſay, it's true, That at firſt, Reaſon, and other good means, might have maſtered the impreſſions, but being ſuffered to brood long upon the Mind, then (like a ſuffuſion in the Eye) they tincture and ſtain it, and every thing in this caſe appears in the colour of their own diſeaſe.

Now, certainly, a Deluſion which thus overtakes a Man, muſt be call'd voluntary, and ſo far culpable, though not in its ſelf, yet in its Sources and Cauſes. 'Tis juſt as we blame a Man, who through outragious Love, or exceſſive Drinking, falls into Frenzies, the wildneſs of which, while it laſts, he ſhall be fatally ſubject to, and yet ſurely his ſottiſhneſs in contracting it, can't be call'd innocent.

I do not doubt but *John of Leyden* as verily believ'd himſelf that *the King of Sion was come*, when he ran naked, and bellow'd it about the Streets of *Munſter*; as *John of Stratford*, that he had ſeen a glorious Appearance of our Bleſſed Lord and Saviour preparing to Judge the World, and to ſave *Sion*, and the Borders, that is *Water-Stratford*, and the Parts adjacent.

None can give better proof that they are in *earneſt*,

neſt, (but for all that we muſt not call 'em *ſincere*,) than to venture their Lives upon it, as thoſe miſerable Wretches did in *Germany*, with *Veni, Creator ſpiritus*, always in their mouths; and as *Hacket* and *Venner*, and his *Fifth-Monarchy-Men* here in *England*, appealing as Solemnly to God as theſe Witneſſes of Mr. *Maſon*'s did, (in their Pamphlet call'd, *Two Witneſſes to the Mid-Night-Cry*,) and praying as long as they had breath.

If a Man was Sincere, he would hear an Argument, but all the Arguments in the World are inſignificant to ſuch as think they can confront them by a *Viſion* or *Revelation*.

Dr. *More*, in his *Myſtery of Godlineſs*, tells us, That *Enthuſiaſtick* Madneſs is never diſjoyned from the higheſt kind of Pride, *even there where it ſeems to be moſt humble*. For the attributing nothing to it ſelf, but that all its Knowledge and Power is immediately from God, is nothing elſe but an oſtentation of an higher kind of Power, and more infallible way of Knowledge than other Mortals have; of which *Mahomet*'s Viſion is a lively Repreſentation.

It is ſome-what pitiable indeed, when the Study of the Scriptures proves an occaſion of ſuch Deluſions. But *Manna* us'd otherwiſe than by Divine Preſcription, *bred Worms*, and ſtank. Nor is it

it ſtrange, that Perſons who have fits of our firſt Mother, (Curioſity, and Pride, and Itch after forbidden Knowledge,) ſhould grow giddy, by looking down upon depths of Speculation, which the *Divine Spirit* has interdicted our ſearch into. Such are in particular, our Lord's preciſe time of Coming to Judgment, the punctual Seaſon of his Reſtoring the Kingdom to *Iſrael*, which the Father has put in his own power.

The Truth is, the Opinion of the *Chiliaſts*, had need be exceedingly weeded and prun'd, or elſe it will bewitch the Imagination, and raviſh the lower Man with gay and glittering forms of the Empire of the Saints, the *New Jeruſalem*, Enthroning of Chriſt, *&c.* Or elſe it will, not only divert us from the Expectation of a more Heavenly Bliſs, and invite us to ſit down on this ſide *Jordan*; but it will, if purſu'd home, ſap the Foundation of our Lord's Spiritual Kingdom, by interpreting the Prophecies of it to an earthly Senſe. But to proceed;---Could that Man be perfectly Sincere, who (when he was by Office and Duty, a Guide and Inſtructor of the Ignorant) never minded that of S. *Paul*, adviſing Men *not to be ſoon ſhaken in mind, nor to be troubled, neither by ſpirit, nor by word, nor by letter, dictated by a truly divine ſpirit, as that the day of Chriſt was at hand.*

Could he be in all parts of Duty Sincere, and yet take no notice that ſearching of the Scriptures, judging of our ſelves what is right, proving all things that we may hold faſt that which is good, are duties?

Alas! Sincerity obliges us to do all we can to know the beſt, as well as to act according to the beſt of our Knowledge.

A rational Believer is not only to believe willingly what God ſays, but is alſo to uſe diligence in ſearching whether God has ſaid it.

Supine Credulity and neglect of this, is oftentimes a cauſe that Man is given over to a reprobate Mind, or undiſcerning Underſtanding.

Sincerity muſt take in *moral Prudence*, (which is the perfection and vertue of the judging Powers within us) to make it compleat; and then the eye of the Mind will be kept clear and perſpicacious; then will all corporeal Impreſſions be duly examin'd, and brought to a true Teſt, and juſt Light, whereby may be diſcover'd what is ſolidly true, and ſincerely good.

This will enable us to form Perſuaſions about divine Matters, not only confident and vigorous, (for ſtrength of Perception is not always a badg of Truth,) but alſo true, Subſtantial and Real, I mean ſuch as will approve themſelves to all Impartial Enquirers. The

The more we are enclin'd to *curioſities* by our natural Temper, we ſhould the more nicely and *curiouſly* inſpect our *Phantaſms*, and examine our own *Conceits*.

The neglect of this I take to be the great cauſe of Mr. *Maſon*'s miſcarriage, and therefore it grieves my very heart to think, that Men who pretend to Senſe, yea, and Religion too, ſhould (out of fondneſs to any Man's perſon) ſo ſtate the Queſtion, as if they were more ſuſpicious of God than Man.

Shall we call this Charity, to be unjuſt?

Shall we be unjuſt to God, who cannot Err, that we may be charitable to Man, who at beſt is prone to it? No, no, Let God be true, and every Man a liar.

If we are unwilling to Judge the Man evil, 'till we ſee his wickedneſs; Let us, at leaſt, never think ill of God, 'till we can be aſſur'd of Man's Sincerity; and becauſe that can never be certainly diſcover'd, we muſt never admit the leaſt thought that may poſſibly reflect on God.

I ſay not this for want of a farther Anſwer, for I could be full of Argument, let the Queſtion be ſtated how it will; but I can't forbear expreſſing my reſentment and indignation againſt all ſuch, as would rob, as would dethrone God, that they

may Deifie a Man, and that chiefly for being out of the way.

If they love Mr. *Maſon*, becauſe he was good, one would think they ſhould love God too for his goodneſs; becauſe their beloved Mr. *Maſon* could have no goodneſs but what he receiv'd from Him. And if they love him for any other qualification, they do but careſs an Imperfection, and hug a Deluſion; they do but tread in the ſteps of the *Heathens*, who deify'd their Paſſions and Diſtempers; they imitate the *Turks*, who to this day, count mad and epileptick People Sacred. *Peſſima res eſt eorum apotheoſis, & pro peſte intellectus habenda eſt, ſi vanis accedit veneratio.* Nov. org. Aph. 65.

Vain Creatures! That profeſs a veneration for the Man, becauſe they thought him *God-like* and *good*, and at the ſame time would admit a ſuppoſal, That God is leſs than good, and unlike Himſelf. I could----- *Sed præſtat motos componere----*

The Query is, *How it may conſiſt with the Divine Goodneſs to permit a man of no ill deſign, to fall into ſo great Deluſions?*

Here, it is likely, ſome would have made no difficulty to anſwer roundly, That 'tis no ways inconſiſtent with God's Attributes, to convey a falſe Perſuaſion in Religion into the mind of his Creature, provided there be no moral turpitude in it.

t. But I cannot ſee why falſehood in Religion, ſhould claim Kindred with Heaven, by ſo near and immediate a deſcent. God is Light, and in Him is no Darkneſs at all; nor can the ſame Fountain ſend out ſweet Waters and bitter. I hope we may reſolve the caſe on better grounds than theſe. For when God in his Wiſdom and Goodneſs had afforded us his word, and unconteſtable Revelation for our Light, and Reaſon for the Eye to diſcern it; and had in the fundamental parts tranſmitted to us thoſe Scriptures, interpreted to us by the holieſt and beſt of Men, the early Guides of the truly *Catholick* and *Apoſtolick Church*; and had done all it could become a prudent Law-giver to do, to forewarn us of our danger in going aſtray, and to fence us in (while we are in purſuit of Truth) by ſuch Precepts as theſe; *To be wiſe unto ſobriety; not to intrude into thoſe things which we have not ſeen; vainly puft up in our fleſhly mind: To contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints*, &c. Having done this, I ſay, and much more to ſecure us; I ſee not how more could be expected at his gracious Hands.

If after this, Mens fanciful Heads will break through all reſtraints, and over Hedge and Ditch follow the *Will with wiſp* of Imaginations, and wandring Lights, it is a double injury to charge God of

of defective Conduct. His Providence is no more bound to preſerve us from Error than from Sin, in a forcible way; nor can it be any imputation upon his Goodneſs, that after the Proviſion he has made to make all Men wiſe and good, there ſhould yet remain ſome wavering, or weak in Faith, others fluttering after ſhining Fancies in a Scripture dreſs.

Can we imagine Truth dearer to Him than Holineſs? Or, that bad Diet will not produce Diſtempers? And curious and myſterious Studies in things too high for us, ſhould not end in vapours and giddineſs?

As for Holineſs of Life (which the devout Siſter ſtands upon,) 'tis the ſame thing that was pleaded for *Pelagius*, *Socinus*, and ſeveral others that I could name, who lead as vertuous Lives, and were as exemplary in their Converſations. But in plain Truth, Men of weak Judgments, and of devout Affections, impreſſive Fancies, and indiſcreet Auſterities, will ever be obnoxious, by the plain reaſon of the thing, to ſuch Temptations; and therefore I muſt tell ſuch Perſons, who have already overcome the reliſhes of the Fleſh, that their proper Scene of Trial and Virtue, lies in cleanſing themſelves from filthineſs of Spirit; ſuch is Singularity,

larity, Newfangl'dneſs, Spiritual Pride, and doting on our Darling Opinions.

The *wholſome Words*, and the *ſound Doctrine*, which the Apoſtle mentions in his Epiſtles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, do, (if not primarily ſignifi'd) at leaſt imply (*mens ſana*) the Doctrine of Men ſound in their Wits; and I am confirm'd in the thought, from the Words ſet in oppoſition to *them*.

Thus in the *ſixth* of the *firſt* to *Timothy*, and the *fourth* Verſe, in oppoſition to *wholſome Words*, we read of the Man that *dotes about Queſtions*, that is ſick or craz'd, νοσῶν, *Delirat ut ſæpe ſolent ægroti*, ſays *Grotius*. And *Diodat* explains it by a kind of Frenzy, and violent Paſſion. *Delirans inſtar fœminæ pica laborantis*, ſays a third, ſo troubled with the *Green Sickneſs* of the Mind, that (*neglectis ſanis eduliis, vel noxia, vel minus ſana, deperit*;) he likes nothing but what is unſound, and will encreaſe the Diſtemper. And Verſe the *fifth*, 'tis oppos'd by *perverſe Diſputings of men of corrupt minds*; as we read it; but I think it ſhould be render'd, the odd Diſputings of Men, that have their Underſtandings perverted.

Yea, I am apt to think that 'tis call'd *ſound Doctrine*, in a direct oppoſition to the Doctrine of Men that are craz'd *quoad hoc*, in oppoſition to *the Doctrine of the Kingdom*, as they call it.

Titus

Titus 1*ſt* and the 9*th*, Holding faſt the *Faithful Word*, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by *ſound Doctrine*, both to exhort and to convince. ------- *Not giving heed to Jewiſh Fables.* Of which we know the chief was, That the Meſſiah was to ſet up a worldly Kingdom. *Non intendentes Judaicis Fabulis de Meſſia Rege terreno, de reſurrectione priore in his terris*, ſays *Grotius* upon the place.

But to draw to a Concluſion. Over-ſtraining of Devotion, produces more crazy Viſioniſts and Enthuſiaſts, than any one Cauſe whatſoever: And when, like *Turkiſh Derviſes*, Men have grown giddy and entranc'd by Penſiveneſs, long Faſting and Rigour (unreaſonable and unſupportable to Nature,) the next ſtep is, that they ſhall entitle their ſeveral Fancies to ſome Sacred regard, and deliver Dreams for Oracles. And would you have God work Miracles for ſuch Mens ſecurity, who has declared, *He delights not in the Sacrifice of Fools.*

No----- We may juſtly leave them to walk in the Fires that they have kindled, partly by colliſion of Hard and Apocalyptick Paſſages againſt one another, and partly by hardſhips upon their Natures of their own impoſing; which raiſes the *Lee* of Melancholy in their Humours and Blood, and diſturbs the Inſtruments of Reaſon, and the Animal Spirits, or chaſes them into too rapid or vertiginous Motions;

Motions; as a mere Fire-ſtick whirl'd about, ſhall appear a Circle, or a Globe of Fire.

Let us not then be angry at the nature of things, nor ſuſpect the Almighty Goodneſs, becauſe his Wiſdom did not permit him to exert his miraculous Power to undeceive his *Creature*, who did all he could to cheriſh his Diſtemper, and make much of the Deluſion.

2. But *Secondly*; Whereas you ſay it is not to be conceiv'd, how God ſhould ſuffer ſo holy and good a Man to be deceiv'd; I beſeech you, for God's ſake, to conſider again, that we can at moſt but gueſs at Man's Goodneſs.

The inward Principle (which alone can give him his due Epithet) is unknown to us. In Charity we judge well where the Evil is not apparent; but we know a Man may be ſuperſtitious in avoiding Superſtition, or be over-credulous for fear of falling into Unbelief; a Man may pride himſelf in his Humility, and his breathing after a more pure way, may be nothing more than an affectation of Singularity. And withal I muſt ſay, it gives one ſome cauſe to ſuſpect this, where we ſee People affect a Set of new and peculiar Phraſes; as, *hanging upon the Skirts of Chriſt*, *getting of Oil*, with twenty more ſuch like canting expreſſions, that I could name.

We may well make a demur to the plea of Holineſs, becauſe it is often misjudged by its being meaſured by the Standards of a Party. Hair Shirts and Diſcipline, are in ſome places marks of Grace; and elſewhere, a Man commences Saint, by moroſe Zeal, from ſour Faces, and extempore Effuſions.

4. Though he might mean well, yet his ſins of Ignorance might deſerve Correction.

Sins of Ignorance, we know, are puniſhable in the *whole Congregation*, and they become thereby guilty; as is plain from *Lev.* 4. 13. and therefore is a Sacrifice order'd upon their account, *v.* 14. But Ignorance is almoſt inſufferable in the *Prieſt*, whoſe buſineſs it is to know the Will of God, and to inſtruct others.

If he inſtructs *his Hearers* amiſs, it may (it is likely) extenuate *their* Guilt in ſome meaſure; but I can't but think, that *He himſelf* muſt pay for it. And therefore it is obſervable in the forenam'd Chapter, (where he ſpeaks of ſins of Ignorance, and of them only,) *Moſes* begins firſt with the Prieſt, *verſe* 3. *If the Prieſt that is anointed do ſin according to the ſin of the People*, &c. It ſhould have been render'd, *If the Prieſt ſin to the ſin or guilt of the People*, (*i. e.* To make them ſinful or guilty: To cauſe the People to ſin, as it is well render'd

render'd by the *Seventy*,) *by giving them Matter to offend, either by Doctrine or Example*, as *Tremellius* explains it. This, though it be done out of ignorance, requires an Offering greater than is order'd for the common People, *verſe* 28. yea, greater than for a Ruler, *verſe* 22. And therefore I conclude the Sin in a Prieſt (though it be *of ignorance*) is much greater than the like ſin in any other. *He that cauſes many others to ſin, 'tis fit he ſhould be deluded, that many others may learn Righteouſneſs.*

If it be enquir'd, Wherein did he cauſe others to ſin? I may tell you in a few inſtances out of many, *viz.*

By neglecting the Rites and Offices of the *Church*, he caus'd others to neglect them.

He caus'd many of the neighbouring Pariſhes to forſake their Paſtors.

He occaſion'd many worthy Miniſters of Chriſt to be cenſur'd, becauſe they would not violate their Conſciences, and do as he did.

He occaſion'd a Separation, and encourag'd *Schiſm.*

How great a Sin this is, I ſhall not now determine, but be it as great as it will, 'tis I am ſure far greater in a *Miniſter of Chriſt* (though I ſay nothing of his Subſcriptions and Oaths) than it

can be in another, becauſe *his* main buſineſs is to preach up *Union*, and to oppoſe thoſe who would *cauſe Diviſions*. I ſay farther, be it as great as it will in the People, and greater in the Paſtor, it will ſtill be an aggravation of it *at this time*, when ſo many new Sects are brooding.-------

Again, His diſmal apprehenſions of an Eternal Decree, which had damn'd the major part of Mankind, mov'd the fiery Spirits of many of his Hearers, to aſpire to the ſame whole-ſale Condemnation.

In a word, He made a great number to neglect their Families, their Buſineſs and Calling, and to lead a ſantering life all the Week long.

4. Laſtly, Though we ſhould ſtill grant that he meant well, yet God might have ſeveral good Ends in ſuffering this Deluſion. Namely:

1. That other Men may be the more thankful, that God hath kept 'em within the compaſs of his revealed Will, and all juſt Moderation, as Biſhop *Hall* ſpeaks it, *Solil.* 29. and that they whom he hath bleſt with Wiſdom, and a diſcerning Spirit, might the better content themſelves with their ſhare, (*Caſaub. p.* 47.) and be the more heartily thankful for that which he there calls the higheſt gift of God (Grace excepted, which is the Reformation of it) namely, *ſound Reaſon.*

2. There

2. There may be another end of this Divine Permiſſion of an Error, *viz.* Becauſe ſome certain earthy and heavy Complexions are hereby inveagled into the ways of Holineſs, and ſtirr'd up by that vehemency and zeal us'd by ſuch Perſons, to bethink themſelves of the powers of the World to come; when calmer Exhortations, though joyn'd with cloſer Reaſonings, would have been altogether unſucceſsful. And though this indeed be a way of Preaching Chriſt, that is (in the main) unwarrantable, and unſafe, yet we know St. *Paul*, when the Principle was Envy and Strife that actuated the Preacher, rejoyc'd nevertheleſs that *Chriſt* was Preach'd, either in pretence or truth.

3. 'Tis worthy of God to ſuffer it, becauſe hereby an occaſion is adminiſtred to the Guides of the Church, to exerciſe their vigilance, and their gifts of diſcerning of Spirits, in a ſober and rational examination of every confident Pretender. The pious and prudent exerting of ſuch their Authority and Care, being a thing of manifeſt tendency to the ſafety of the Flock, and to the magnifying of the Miniſtry of the Goſpel, in all the Genuine and Apoſtolical methods of its promotion.

4. God's Timing of the permiſſion of this Deluſion, makes it a more ſignal act of his good Providence. When *Liberty in Religion* had made Men Licen-

Licentious, *when* a moſt gracious Indulgence has been abus'd to Extravagancies; *then*, *then* does it pleaſe God to ſuffer this Deluſion, that all Men may be certifi'd of the danger of *Enthuſiaſtick Principles*, both to Church and State. *Nemo ſatis credit tantum delinquere, quantum permittas, aleo indulgent ſibi latius ipſi*, ſays the Satyriſt, *Juv. Sat.* 14.

5. To conclude all, I ſhall in the laſt place give a Parallel caſe which we meet with in the 13 *Chap.* of the *Firſt Book of Kings*, of the *Man of God* out of *Judah*, *by the Word of the Lord*, unto *Bethel*.

Whileſt *Jeroboam* ſtood by the Altar to offer Incenſe, *he* cry'd againſt the Altar *in the Word of the Lord*, and ſaid, *O Altar, Altar! Thus ſaith the Lord*, &c. His Meſſage anger'd *Jeroboam*, and he put forth his hand againſt him, and it dried up. Hereupon *Jeroboam* deſir'd the Man of God to pray for him, that his hand might be reſtor'd. He did, and it ſucceeded. And the Altar was rent, as he foretold. The King then invites him home, by promiſes of a Reward, as well as Refreſhment. But the *Man of God* ſaid unto the King, *If thou wilt give me half thy houſe, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat Bread, or drink Water in this place, for ſo it was charg'd me by the Word of the Lord, Eat no Bread, nor drink Water, nor turn again by the ſame way that thou cameſt*; *ſo he went another way*, &c.

After

After this there was an *old and Lying Prophet in Bethel*, that follows him, and finds him *ſitting under an Oak*, (faint, perhaps, and weary,) and ſmoothly invites him to his Houſe to eat Bread. But he immediately anſwers, I may not, neither will I, *for I was forbid by the Word of the Lord.* When the cunning old Prophet found he was ſufficient Proof againſt his Invitation, he then pretends a Revelation (which he thought a proper Bait for a Man that way given.) *I am a Prophet alſo* (ſays he) *as thou art, and an Angel ſpake unto me by the Word of the Lord, ſaying, Bring him back with thee, into thine Houſe, that he may eat Bread, and drink Water, (but he lied unto him.) So he went back with him, and did eat Bread, and drink Water.* Which he had no ſooner done, but the ſame falſe Prophet that deluded him, pronounc'd his Sentence, and as he returns, *a Lion met him by the way, and ſlew him, and his carcaſs was caſt in the way, and the Aſs ſtood by it; the Lion alſo ſtood by the carcaſs.*

Here now I would fairly ask, Whether this *Man of God* did not deſervedly ſuffer without any poſſible reflection upon God's goodneſs?

For he had as much aſſurance as it was poſſible for Man to receive, of the Mind of God.

The ſign of the Prophecy came to paſs, the withered Hand was reſtored at his Prayer, and we find

find him ſo undoubtedly ſatisfy'd of it, that he denied the *King's* Meat or Treaſures.

And ſhould he not (do you think) have deny'd the *old Prophet* too, notwithſtanding all his warm Words, and Angelical Pretences?

He ſhould not (you muſt needs ſay) have left a certainty for an uncertainty: He was certain that the firſt Order was the Mind of God, and therefore he ought to have obſerv'd it, 'till he had receiv'd from God himſelf (with the ſame, or equal evidence) as poſitive Orders to the contrary. *Thus ſaith the Lord*, v. 21. *Foraſmuch as thou haſt diſobeyed* THE MOUTH OF THE LORD, *and haſt not kept the Commandment which the Lord thy God hath commanded thee*, &c. *Præcepit tibi*, ἐμφατικῶς ſays *Grotius*, (and adds, *Virorum laudatorum facta non laudanda quoties adferuntur in ſacris literis, ſolet aliquid addi, unde intelligamus id non probari,*) commanded *thee* with an Emphaſis. When the Scripture mentions the ill actions of good Men, it commonly adds ſomewhat to ſhow the diſlike of it. Now I dare ſay, there is nothing can be objected againſt this *nameleſs Man of God*, that may not be as fairly urg'd againſt our Neighbour, who had the *Name of a Prophet*, and nothing elſe.

Our Neighbour had long ſince known the true Mind of God reveal'd in his Word, and was well acquainted

acquainted with the evidences that confirm'd it to be his. He had ſeen the good effects that it had wrought on others, and had experienc'd the renovation it had wrought on his mind. It had taught him to deny all manner of Invitations to ſenſual Gratifications, it had made him above the Pleaſures or the Profits of the World; it had taught him to be empty of himſelf, that he might be fill'd with God.

But when he had made ſo great a progreſs in the right way, whilſt he is penſive and thoughtful, and *languiſhing almoſt for a more bliſsful eſtate*, the *Deceiver* overtakes him, ſollicits him ('tis probable) to return, and promiſes that very *refreſhment upon Earth*, for which he *languiſh'd*. At firſt he could anſwer the *Suggeſtion* boldly, *The Word of the Lord has forbid me to expect my refreſhment here.* But when it pretends to be the *Voice of God*, for *God's ſake*, then he diſobeys *his word*, and entitles the *Deluſion* to a *Divine Impulſe*.

Thus is he entertain'd for four or five Years, and then God thought it fit, that the ſame falſe Spirit that firſt impos'd upon him, ſhould perfect the Deluſion, with which he dy'd. *Bene ore mali Prophetæ ſententiam mortis accepit, cujus ſeductione a præceptis vitæ declinavit, ut inde pœnam veraciter ſu-*

meret, unde culpam negligenter admiſit, ſays *Greg.* on the Death of the *Man of God.*

Nor can any thing that I know of be ſaid for Mr. *Maſon*, that may not more fairly be pleaded for the *Man of God.*

If you plead that *his* Error was not wilful, the ſame may be ſaid for the *Man of God*; and Ignorance or Negligence under the *Law*, was not ſo culpable as it is under the *Goſpel.*

If you ſay that Mr. *Maſon* had many grounds for his compliance; 'tis anſwer'd, the Man of God had as many, and more reaſonable.

Mr. *Maſon*'s Friends I have heard plead, That there has been formerly ſupernatural Impulſes; and therefore he being a truly good Man, had reaſon to expect and believe them. But may not the ſame be better urg'd for the other's relying upon the old Prophet, when communications of that Nature were more frequent; and he might modeſtly think, Why ſhould not this old Prophet have a Revelation as well as my ſelf?

But Mr. *Maſon*, they ſay, had ſomething in Scripture to countenance the Suggeſtion. Suppoſe it was ſo, yet his Anonymous Predeceſſour had much more; for did not God countermand to *Abraham* the Sacrificing of his Son? And was not *Balaam*,

Balaam, that had been forbidden, bid afterwards to go with the Meſſengers, *Numb.* 22.

Theſe, and ſuch like Inſtances, might more rationally perſuade, than two or three obſcure Texts, full of Myſtical Alluſions.

But notwithſtanding all this that might be ſaid for the Man of God, *a Lion met him by the way and ſlew him.*

I urge not this, becauſe I would have it thought that Mr. *Maſon's well-meaning* may not in *ſome meaſure* leſſen his guilt, and his Vapours more. But I would have thoſe conſiderations be of what force they can to extenuate the Crime; becauſe I find the Lion did not devour the *Carcaſs*, when it had deſtroy'd the *Man*. And I would be glad to have it thought, that the poor deluded People were leſs culpable, than their Teacher; becauſe the Aſs that ſtood by (and went only as he was driven,) though he was in danger, had no hurt.

However, it ſhould be a warning to every one (that is not quite rid of his Senſes) never to cleave to any Man's Opinion out of admiration to his Perſon, but to make God only Soveraign Lord of his Faith. It ſhould teach us, that *right Reaſon* is the illumination of the Mind; and when *it* is in a calm Spirit, is the beſt Inſpiration we have grounds

to

to expect. That the Method for our Salvation being long ſince eſtabliſh'd, we have no reaſon to look for any farther Revelation. In a word, it ſhould teach us to be careful in matter of Religion, to keep within the due bounds of God's Revealed Will, and ſo to endeavour the advancement of the common Good, *as* that a pious Zeal may not draw in Confuſion, nor by a miſtake rear up the Walls of *Babel*, whilſt we intend *Jeruſalem*; as the Devout Biſhop *Hall* moſt piouſly adviſes.

FINIS.